

JOHNSON GENERAL STORE

Constructed: 1916-17
Address: 2005 Railroad Street
Current owner: C.L. Johnson

Lehi Junction in the early 1880s was a vibrant focal point of railroad, industrial, and commercial activities. The Salt Lake & Western and the Utah Central Railways spawned numerous business pursuits along historic Railroad Street. Heber Comer established the first mercantile in the area shortly after the Lehi Junction depot was completed in 1881 at the intersection of Railroad Street and 2100 North. Not much is known about Comer's store except that it was burglarized on 25 January 1883 by engine tender William H. Colton. The pickings were slim. All the thief received from his efforts was some change and a pouch of tobacco.

Comer sold the store in 1890, purchased a piece of property from Joseph Dorton at 116 West Main, and erected a large twenty-four-by-fifty-foot brick building. While John and Alma fitted the new place up for a saloon, the elder Comer devoted his energies to other enterprises--including an ice business, several ice cream parlors, a shoe shop, and a threshing business.

The 19 October 1905 *Lehi Banner* reported that Charles L. Johnson purchased the junction store on Railroad Street from William Melanthay. Johnson moved his family into a three-room house attached to the south side of the mercantile. "Much of the store business," wrote his daughter Lucille (White), "was filling orders to be sent out to the mining towns of Sunshine, Topliff, and Mercur." Railroad work crews, who lived in outfit cars on a siding near the depot, were also a source of business. A popular grocery item (remembered by Lucille White) was the fresh baked bread delivered daily by rail from the Royal Bread Company in Salt Lake City.

In 1916-17 Johnson built a new brick store near the old frame one. Three years later he constructed a new frame residence just north of his store. For a time Johnson's wife Jennie became the shopkeeper while he worked in a gravel pit at the Point of the Mountain. In 1926 the family moved to Pleasant Grove, opened the Busy Corner Store, and leased their junction operations to Will and Lizzie Evans. Five years later the Johnsons returned to Lehi, opening their Busy Corner Store at 101 West Main. This venture was not successful and they repurchased the junction store from Jessie

Peterson in 1934.

The Johnson General Store was managed by Dean Barnhurst, Johnson's son-in-law, until the mid-1950s, when it closed. The building, vacant today, remains a lonely sentinel from the past--a ghost-like memory of long-ago years when Railroad Street was the hustling, bustling heart of commercial activity at Lehi Junction.